

# BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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## What Do I Think?

**LauraSue Schlatter, Trustee**

I am new to Unity's board this year. We had a retreat in January, and our first regular meeting in February. "So how is it?" people ask me, "What do you think?" I am writing this column in February — and, appropriately, the word I think of when I

think of Unity's board is "integrity." This is a group of people willing to dig deep and be honest, who believe that the Moral Owners of Unity Church are not only the members of Unity, but "others who yearn for the Beloved Community and see Unity Church-Unitarian as an instrument for its realization."

At our January retreat, we made plans to strengthen the integrity of the board's work, within and among the trustees, in our relationship to our congregational community, and with our Moral Owners. We rearranged our agenda (which you can now find on our webpage, a week prior to our monthly meeting) to achieve a stronger, more intentional focus on antiracist, multicultural awareness and discussion. We moved our generative discussion from the end of our meeting to the beginning. In February, we started our meeting with 40 minutes of conversation about our relationships to certainty, to centering comfort, and to our new covenant. Each of us had a copy of a shorthand version of Tema Okun's "Characteristics of White Dominant Culture," focusing on the antidotes, and Unity's Faith Formation and Antiracist Multicultural Double Helix. The quality of the conversation was striking. To our surprise, we were also able to get all our regular business done on time. What do I think? I think our trustees listen deeply to one another, are willing to change, and take personal risks. It is also a group of people who laugh together.

The board also established a communications and education committee. The committee will work with Rev. Rolenz and the Executive Team to create a plan over the coming year about different aspects of the search process, to help us be better prepared. We hope this committee will help to bring greater transparency to the process of selecting our next settled minister.

Also in February, we began dealing with the nuts and bolts of the new ministerial search process in earnest. Unity has learned an enormous amount about the search process in the past nine months. The board has much to do — and we will be asking you, our church community, to help in a variety of ways — not just with the search itself, but with other aspects of board work. We hope you will consider applying to be on the ministerial search team, offer a nomination, or engage in other ways with the trustees and staff during this busy time!

When I think about the integrity of the trustees, I know that they are not exceptional at Unity Church. I have been a part of this community for more than 25 years — I know that this is a place where integrity and service thrive. I am grateful for this chance to serve on the board, and look forward to engaging in the work with many of you as we move forward.

## The Next Ministerial Search

**Unity Church Board of Trustees**

A number of people have asked for more information about why the board decided to move forward with the next search for a settled senior minister now, rather than a year from now. The questions have been asked from a place of curiosity rather than concern, and we would like to share more information about how we arrived at our decision.

Over the past nine months, the board has been working with Rev. Kathleen Rolenz, and the Executive Team as a whole, to identify areas we need to work on as a congregation to better prepare ourselves for the next search. There have been listening sessions, ministerial support opportunities for those feeling hurt and disappointment with the vote last May, workshops reflecting on what we have learned and identifying areas for growth, and efforts to improve our congregational acumen around complexity and conflict with a Team Dynamics training. All of this work has asked us to lean into the complexity, to listen to and understand a multiplicity of experiences, and to not rush in and "fix" something before we know what needs attention. We have been practicing the antidotes to white dominant culture.

What we heard from Rev. Rolenz and Rev. David Pyle, Mid-America Regional Lead who has come to Unity Church twice since May, is that they see a much healthier congregation than they expected. We are resilient, and doing the challenging work of being with our discomfort and not over-simplifying what happened. We are seeing a clearer picture and gaining a growing understanding of the complex set of factors that led us to where we are today.

In addition to the readiness piece, we also considered the potential loss of momentum to the congregation in moving things out an additional year. This includes not having Rev. Rolenz for a third-year because of her commitment to stay with us for two years only. Finding a one-year interim would be difficult and include a steep learning curve and limited time to build relationships with the congregation. The Executive Team also noted that an additional year of interim would be taxing on staff because of the amount of support required. Interim work is largely a two-year process and we have made great strides in doing much of this work already.

Board focus for the next steps includes:

- Developing the charge for the ministerial search team,
- Implementing a process for selecting the next ministerial search team,
- Examining our bylaws as they relate to voting access, and
- Implementing a communication/education plan in coordination with the Executive Team.

There is additional board work underway on various other matters, but these are the items as they relate to the next search. Please pay attention to opportunities for congregational involvement in the coming weeks and months. We have much work to do — together.